



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

**Frank J. Magill,
Acting United States Attorney**

David Anderson, Public Affairs Specialist
(612) 664-5684; cell: (612) 730-2251

News Release

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Hermantown man pleads guilty to possessing child pornography

The federal government has made it a priority to protect children from the potential dangers of the Internet, and today a 43-year-old Hermantown man pleaded guilty to one count of possession of child pornography.

Jeffrey Lyle Fossum pleaded Feb. 28 before United States District Court Judge John Tunheim in Minneapolis. A sentencing date has not yet been scheduled.

According to Fossum's plea agreement, he knowingly possessed more than 600 images and video files that contained visual depictions of minors engaging in sexually explicit activity on July 20, 2006. During the execution of a search warrant of Fossum's residence, officers seized a computer and numerous compact discs that contained the material, which depicted many children under the age of 12.

If convicted, Fossum faces a potential maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and lifelong supervised release. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge. This case is the result of an investigation by the Hermantown Police Department and the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Nathan Petterson.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood (PSC), a national initiative that encourages the use of multi-jurisdictional task forces to investigate and prosecute cases that involve the sexual exploitation of children over the Internet. PSC urges that law enforcement efforts be complemented by community-wide campaigns to assist victims of exploitation and to educate parents, other adults, and children about Internet safety.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, one in 33 children receives an unwanted sexual solicitation online each year. One in four children experiences unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material on the Internet each year. And, more than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet every week. Moreover, recent research conducted by the Federal Bureau of Prisons indicates a strong correlation between possessing or distributing child

pornography and committing sexual-contact crimes against children.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.